

William Shakespeare's historical tragedy Macbeth continues to embody ethical and political values that are applicable to contemporary society. Macbeth was ambitious to be the king and once he achieved this goal he did everything in his ability to stay in that position of power. This can be likened to the events of the Australian democratic system, with parties and politicians fighting for both positions of powers and the stability of those positions. The role of genders in contemporary society is much the same as the roles in Shakespeare's representation of medieval Scotland. There are strong themes of gender binarism with relation to whom can and cannot complete certain actions.

Ambition plagues the characters of Macbeth much the same as it effects the leaders of our country today. Macbeth was once a noble soldier until he was grasped by the idea of becoming the king of Scotland. This desire was sparked by the third witch when she cackled "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!". Ambition controls the flow of the entire play and is the driving point for both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's decision making. These decisions, for example killing king Duncan, shape the play's progression. Our first knowledge of this desire comes in Act 1 Scene 3 when Macbeth states "If good, why do I yield to that suggestion". Shakespeare has used a rhetorical question in this line to make the audience start empathising with Macbeth and try to understand the workings of his mind. Macbeth is yearning for the crown, but he also lacks the motivation to take it, questioning himself as though he is ashamed of the thought. This motivation comes from Lady Macbeth's longing for Macbeth to be king. This yearning for her husband to become king is first shown in her soliloquy where she talks of how she will convince her husband to do what she wishes "pour my spirits in thine ear/And chastise with the valor of my tongue". Shakespeare metaphorically represents Lady Macbeth's words as spirits. This comparison of her words to liquor highlights that Lady Macbeth is ambitious for her husband to wear the crown and decides to turn this aspiration into action by manipulating her husband to see things the same way. Once in power Macbeth's ambition is still not sated, this is evident when Macbeth states "Stars hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires." This continued ambition can be compared to that of our people in power today. When one of the ABC's Q & A's panellists referred to Macbeth as "The Scomo play" he was referring to the instability of our government and the power growth attitude of our leading parties. Everything they do is to gain more power, or to hold on to the power they already have. This was Macbeth's mindset, to do all he can to maintain his position. Shakespeare's use of imagery clearly highlights Macbeth's self-awareness of his terrible desire. "Let not light see my black and deep desires." He knows he shouldn't continue chasing these goals and this mindset could get him killed. Not even light can see his desires, or it will unravel all he has done. This overarching theme of ambition dictates the path and rulings of Shakespeare's Macbeth and continues to embody much of contemporary society with particular attention to our political system.

Issues of gender are embodied into the ethical values of both Shakespeare's Macbeth and contemporary society. Gender is a controversial topic in contemporary society, with the very popular question of what makes you male or female and what that means. This is the very same question asked by the characters of Shakespeare's Macbeth. The critical reading Changing Gender Roles In Macbeth mentions how Shakespeare plays with gender stereotype with "Macbeth acting more feminine than masculine" at times and presenting "women with masculine characteristics" such as Lady Macbeth and the witches. During Lady Macbeth's soliloquy she asks to be "unsexed" to be removed of her feminine traits "Come to my woman's breasts, /And take my milk for gall,". She is asking to be stripped of her femininity and to be made a man as she believes a woman is unable to do the deeds she wishes to commit. Shakespeare's use of metaphor in this quote enriches Lady Macbeth's desire to become masculine. Personifying her femininity as the milk from her breasts. It gives the audience a better understanding of what Lady Macbeth wishes allowing them to

empathise with her. From this place forward Lady Macbeth is represented with many masculine traits, she appears free from guilt, which Shakespeare has presented as a feminine trait. Lady Macbeth using her husband's guilt to manipulate him, insulting his masculinity. During the scene where Macbeth meets Banquo's ghost it is evident that his fear is seen as feminine and he carries a sense of shame along with that. "I am a man again", the first line he speaks after Banquo's ghost leaves, implies that while he was fearful of the ghost he was no man, that before this point he was feminine. This classification of traits into stereotypes continues to be an issue that effects people in contemporary society. Some people are unsexed just as Lady Macbeth wished for and many men struggle to accept 'feminine traits' and see them as a sign of weakness. Shakespeare's Macbeth continues to uphold much the same ethical and political values of many individuals of our contemporary society.

William Shakespeare's historical tragedy Macbeth continues to embody ethical and political values that are applicable to contemporary society. This is illustrated in the guiding themes of gender and ambition. Macbeth's toxic ambition to be king, when in combination with Lady Macbeth's ambition for the same goal, leads to horrific guilt and uncertainty. Lady Macbeth using these emotions inherent to femineity to manipulate Macbeth (a masculine trait) to continue ruling with tyranny to maintain their power, until it all becomes too much. This is much the same as Australia's politicians. Ambition can be seen clouding otherwise good intentions. The play also provides a great perspective upon gender roles, stereotypes and fluidity. Shakespeare's presentation of these themes continues to be relevant in our society today.